

Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration

July 4, 2012

How's it going, everybody? Are you hot? It's supposed to be hot. It's the fourth of July. Happy Fourth of July, everybody! On behalf of the entire Obama family, welcome to the White House.

Now, the last thing anybody wants to do is to ruin a nice backyard barbecue with a long speech, so I'm going to be quick.

It is always such an honor for us to spend this holiday with members of our military and your extraordinary families. All of you represent what is best in America. You serve under our proud flag. You and your families sacrifice more than most of us can ever know, all in defense of those God-given rights that were first put to paper 236 years ago: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

So as your Commander in Chief, but also as an American, I want to invite all of you over to say one thing: Thank you.

Today, all across America—at schools, and beaches, in town squares—Americans are celebrating the freedoms that all of you and your families defend. Like many of them, we're grilling in the backyard. We've got some pretty good tunes for you. We've got the outstanding Marine Band. Give them a big round of applause. And we've got Brad Paisley and his band in the house for a little country.

We've also got all of you. We've got Army in the house. We've got Navy. We've got Air Force. You know we've got some marines here. And we've got Coast Guard. Today we salute all of you.

We salute our soldiers, like Sergeant Alan Ruehs, who, in the midst of an enemy ambush in Afghanistan, risked his own life to save the lives of four others.

We salute our sailors, like Petty Officer Taylor Morris, who suffered terrible wounds while serving in Afghanistan on an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team, but who inspires us all through his incredible recovery.

We salute an airman, Colonel Charles Barnett, who led close to 200 combat missions in Afghanistan and still serves his country by volunteering to care for our fallen heroes at Arlington National Cemetery.

We salute a marine, Corporal Alex Nguyen, who sustained serious injuries when his vehicle struck an IED in Afghanistan, but who carries on stronger than ever.

We salute a "Coastie" from my hometown of Chicago, Lieutenant Commander Michelle Watson, who was one of the first African American women to graduate from the Coast Guard Academy, and went on to perform exceptional service in Operation Enduring Freedom.

All the men and women who stand with us here this afternoon are an example of this generation of heroes, this 9/11 generation, that has earned its place in history alongside the greatest generations. Because of your service and sacrifice, all of our troops are now out of Iraq. Because of your service—[*applause*]—because of your service and sacrifice, we took the fight to al Qaida and we brought Usama bin Laden to justice. Because of your service and

sacrifice, we're transitioning out of Afghanistan. We will remain ready for any threat. That is all because of you.

And as long as I have the honor of being your Commander in Chief, I want you all—our men and women in uniform, our veterans and their families—to know this: America will always remember. We will always be there for you, just as you've been there for us. That's my promise. That is America's promise. And that is one that we pledge to fulfill on this Independence Day.

So happy Fourth of July, everybody. Enjoy the fireworks. Get some hotdogs. God bless you. God bless your families. And God bless these United States of America.

And with that, let me turn it back over to the United States Marine Band.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:02 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Independence Day celebration.

Names: Barnett, Charles; Nguyen, Alex; Paisley, Brad D.; Ruehs, Alan; Watson, Michelle.

Subjects: ; Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Casualties; Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Civil rights : Racial equality ; Civil rights : Women's rights and gender equality ; Holidays and special observances : Independence Day; Iraq : U.S. and coalition forces, withdrawal; Morris, Taylor; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group.

DCPD Number: DCPD201200532.